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Unit Plan

Fall 2014

Rationale

My Unit Plan is over World War II and how people had to survive, that with this survival they underwent changes that they could not necessarily control. With this being said, my students will be reading the novel *Night* and watching the movie *The Book Thief*. These are the main two items we will focus on during the unit. Other sources of literature are *The Treblinka Revolt* by Stanislaw Kohn, “But in the Night” by Nelly Sachs, “Babii Yar” by Yevgeny A. Yeutushenko, “The Trial of the Century” by Tom Post, “A Cambodian Nightmare” by Alex Tizon, and we will also be looking at the Mourner’s Kaddish. These are all in the back of the book of *Night*. I chose to use these connections given in the book because they are other sources of literature that took place during this time or are about the war. They tie in nicely and are a great opening and introduction to the novel and movie. Students will be able to see what happened during the war and gain other viewpoints as well. As Carol Sliwka says that historical fiction helps “students can hear practical advice for their own lives, see how people handle difficult situations, explore diversity and tolerance issues, gain historical intelligence, and become aware of the basis for many of America’s values and beliefs” (62). Students should be able to get historical background knowledge if they are going to read from a novel about a particular past. This is why these other sources help tie in the unit. The movie was chosen because although it may be non-fiction, they get to experience a new character in a situation during World War II. A class set of this particular novel would be hard to come across and the movie does enough justice for the story. The movie also gives them a break from reading and the students get to watch something from this period.

The sources and the unit itself are an easy topic to tie in with interdisciplinary instruction. As the history teacher is going over World War II and the war aspect, we will be reading the literature to go along with it. I believe this will help the students understand both aspects and retain knowledge better. Students will also learn about the Jewish culture and even the German culture. This is through the reading while in their history class they focus on main events. As Smagorinsky states “their themes are central to understanding of a particular culture, whether national, local, or distant,” (141). Saying that it is crucial for us teachers to have in diversity about another culture.

Diversity is shown through the different sources. Each shows different culture, economic and religion specifically. *Night* being the main novel shows all three, especially how the Jewish people live and their religion itself. Showing the students the Mourner’s Kaddish prayer while they are reading the novel is one way for them to learn respect towards this culture and religion. Students will get to see what they go through for a death and see why and if it was possible to do so throughout the novel. The other sources are of articles of the German people and others who were impacted by the war. They will fully understand how different Germany was during this time compared to here in the United States. The movie even shows the differences nicely, putting words into something they can actually see. They can see what the living conditions were like in Germany and what the German people had to do during the war.

I have integrated technology into my unit plan by using iPads for blogging and the computer lab for typing. I would also be using a SmartBoard for showing daily agendas and questions for discussion. I do not have any planned pictures to show, but if need be I could use the SmartBoard to bring up pictures of Elie Wiesel and concentration camps to help students further understand. The integration of technology is part of the Common Core standards. Students also seem to benefit from using some technology in the classroom; they seem more engaged in the work. This is why I specifically chose a blog for them to do over characters. They will have that for their use when need be and is easily accessible. There are no worries about losing them when they are online. This blog would be a private one for class use only so others outside of the class may not view them. Students will be able to do their own work and make sure they are getting everything from one another. Working together after they work on their own is the goal of this assignment. I hope students learn the growth of characters and are able to pay attention better from the use of technology.

The students working together in a group without me being the one directing is a different approach from normal. I have decided to do this because students will be held accountable for their learning of the characters. Group work can do this and Edward Graham confirms this “teachers who work to create a respectful group mentality will have a greater chance of promoting personal accountability in their students” (nea.org). This is another reason why I have small group discussions and worksheets. Small group discussions can sometimes lead to better analysis of a text because “students use their imaginations to build collaborative interpretations that result in material products” (Smagorinsky, 35). This helps the listening and speaking for students and helps them better understand the material. Students generally speak more in small groups and will listen to one another better than trying to compete with the large class. Holding students accountable with the reading is what also is being done during this unit. Students will be asked to read the novel outside of class to get more time for discussion in. This may cause slight problems, but they are being held responsible for this. Reading will be the only way they can do their Character Journals and will help for the test and the writing assignment at the end. The writing assignment chosen will show students ability to write and use of imagination. This also integrates their knowledge of the novel itself as well. They will be doing smaller writing throughout involving quick-writes and two paragraphs that will all help them understand the unit topic.